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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION FROM FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

REPORT CD NO.

DATE DIST. 4 Jan 1954

1953

COUNTRY SUBJECT

USSR - Siberia

Economic - Gold production Sociological - Slave labor

HOW

PUBLISHED Daily newspaper

WHERE

PUBLISHED Milan

DATE

PUBLISHED 28 Oct 1953

LANGUAGE

Italian

NO. OF PAGES

SUPPLEMENT TO

REPORT NO.

DATE OF INFORMATION

MEMBERING OF TITLE IS, SECTIONS ATION OF ITS CONTENTS TO OR PECEIPT BY AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE

Corriere della Sera

INFORMATION ON THE DAL'STROY GOLD MINES IN SIBERIA

The following information is taken from an interview by Pietro Solari, correspondent of the Corrière della Sera, with Hans Haeffner, a German prisoner recently returned by the Soviet Union. Heeffner, who lives in Stein near Nuernberg, was captured in January 1945, at which time he held the grade of corporal. A few months after his capture, he was sent to the Dal'stroy region as punishment for stealing potatoes in a prisoner-of-war camp near Moscow. Maeffner spent 7 years in Siberia.7

Every day, large modern planes take off from the various airfields of Siberia for Moscow loaded with gold builion, and once a week a destroyer escort leaves the port of Magadan for Vladivosfok carrying gold from the more than 100 underground and surface gold mines in operation.

Magadan is the capital of the so-called "gold republic," which extends over an area of approximately 600,000 square miles. At the time of Lenin's death, there were only about 10,000 persons living here, whereas today the population working between the Bering Strait and the Kolyma River is in excess of 5 million. It has been estimated that the number of persons sentenced to forced labor and sent to the Dal'stray region of persons sentenced to forced indor and sent to the Dalistriay region every year is about 200,000. Some of the forced laborers come overland and the others on the old 7,000-ton steamer Kym, which makes about 15 or 16 trips a year between Vladivostok and Magadan. This ship usually carries a cargo of "amongelit," a powerful explosive used in the mines, and from 3,000 to 4,000 new prisoners.

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The Dal'stroy region is under the complete jurisdiction of the MVD, and almost the entire population is made up of slave labor and common criminals. Even the soldiers guarding the workers have been sent there for some "crime"; the crime of most of them was that they let themselves be made prisoners of the Germans during the war. The officers, however, serve in Dal'stroy voluntarily, usually for a 3-year period, and it is believed that a tour of duty there helps them in their career.

Working conditions are very severe, food is insufficient, and the clothing is most inadequate. Gold is dug both in underground mines and in surface mines, but, contrary to general belief, it is much harder to work in the surface mines. The work consists of digging holes about 10 centimeters deep and 10 centimeters wide. It is very difficult to penetrate the frozen ground, especially because hand tools are used exclusively. Each prisoner is expected to dig at least four holes every day. After the rock has been loosened with the explosive charges, it is washed in the usual way. This phase of the work is performed by the more trusted forced laborers, called the beskonvoiniki, who are not kept under the same close supervision as the other prisoners. The daily quota expected of each washer is from 12 to 15 ounces of pure gold.

Those miners and washers who are very diligent or lucky and are able to exceed their quotas are rewarded in proportion to the extra output. For example, one of the prisoners who found a gold nugget weighing about 500 grams was rewarded by having his 15-year sentence reduced by 5 years. (Haeffner himself received 8 months off his sentence because he fulfilled his quota by

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